Roye E. Wates

«Die Oper aller Opern»: *Don Giovanni* as Text for the Romantics

It was exactly two hundred and six years ago, on October 1, 1787, that Wolfgang and Constanze Mozart left Vienna for Prague and the rehearsals and first performance of *Don Giovanni.* This work became in the eyes of the Romantics Mozart's greatest opera; E. T. A. Hoffmann christened it the *Oper aller Opern.* Later, in Eduard Mörike's novella *Mozart auf der Reise nach Prag* (1855), the journey is taken as a metaphor for Mozart's whole life — a youth of charmed innocence, an adulthood marked by tragedy and premature death. To dramatize these opposing poles Mörike reinvents the composition of two scenes from the opera: the entrance of Zerlina and Masetto in Act I and the confrontation between Don Giovanni and the statue at the end of Act II.[1] Franz Liszt's *Don Juan-Fantasy* (1841) highlights these same two scenes, beginning and ending with music associated with the statue and enclosing within its sinister frame variations on «Là ci darem la mano» and a brief celebration of the Champagne Aria. What a remarkable coincidence, that two such different artists — a poet so musically shy he was frightened by Schubert's *Erlkönig* and a composer who was a veritable *enfant terrible* — that two such men should venerate the same opera, create important works derived from it, and base those works on the same thematic ideas. The two works share perhaps only this surface similarity, yet this fact alone is striking. It points up a characteristic way of understanding *Don Giovanni* in the nineteenth century, a way that seemed to open up both the meaning of the opera and the innermost personality of its composer.

Don Giovanni showed few signs in 1787 and 1788 that it was headed for a glorious career later on. The premiere had to be postponed, replaced on the scheduled date by a performance of *The Marriage of Figaro.* Mozart complained that he was not getting adequate rehearsal time. He also doubted that the Prague company could bring off «eine solche Oper.»[2] One wonders what he meant by this phrase. Was he drawing attention to *Don Giovanni* as a work of mixed genre, or what? There is, as we know, no special significance to the term *dramma giocoso* on the title page, for that term was more or less interchangeable with *opera buffa.* However, Mozart is concerned about some aspect of the work, and at the close of this talk I will speculate on what that may have been. Despite his concern, however, Mozart was able to write a Viennese friend after the premiere that the opera had been received «mit dem lautesten beyfall.»[3] One has to suppose that a work of this complexity was, to put it mildly, not done perfectly the first time out; the overture at least must have been splattered with wrong notes, since the orchestra was playing it at sight.[4] Mozart's letter says nothing about the quality of the performance.

Real success, in any event, meant success in Vienna. This eluded him. Despite numerous changes made to tailor the work to the Viennese cast, audiences there greeted it with only lukewarm praise. The evidence suggests that Mozart himself may not have been wholly satisfied with either the Prague or the Vienna score. Meanwhile, however, a series of odd yet altogether predictable events began turning the opera first into a Singspiel — with German text, and spoken dialog replacing the recitatives — and then into a Romantic tragedy. *Don Giovanni* became *Don Juan,* a work bearing only a general resemblance to the opera Mozart had written in 1787. This it remained until well into the twentieth century.

Many of the alterations dealt with the libretto. Lorenzo da Ponte's original Italian was translated into German around twenty times between 1788 and 1900. There used to be a legend that Mozart himself tried his hand at a few scenes.[5] Among the actual translators were Christian Gottlob Neefe, best known today as Beethoven's teacher; the stage actor and director Friedrich Ludwig Schröder; and the editor of the *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung,* Friedrich Rochlitz. Neefe's translation (1788) lasted only months before being superseded by Schröder's (1789), which, in turn, was supplanted a dozen years later by Rochlitz's (1801).[6]

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1 For a fuller exploration of this topic see the present author's «Eduard Mörike, Alexander Ulïbïshev, and the ‹Ghost Scene› in *Don Giovanni*», in: *The Creative Process* (*Essays in the History of Music* 3), New York: Broude Bros. Ltd. 1993, pp. 31ff.

2 See his letter of October 15, 1787 to Gottfried von Jacquin, in: *Mozart. Briefe und Aufzeichnungen,* hrsg. von der Internationalen Stiftung Mozarteum Salzburg, 7 vols., Kassel 1962-75, vol. IV, pp. 54-55.

3 Letter to G. von Jacquin dated November 4, 1787, in: *Mozart. Briefe,* vol. IV, p. 58.

4 Constanze's recollection of her husband's overnight composition of the overture in time for the premiere is recorded in the biography written by her second husband, Georg Nikolaus von Nissen, *Biographie W. A. Mozarts,* Leipzig 1828, pp. 510f. There seems no reason to doubt this report by the only eyewitness we have.

5 The opening of Act I and the beginning of the Act II finale. See *Mozart. Briefe,* vol. VI, pp. 677-687.

6 Neefe's translation was not, however, the first to be performed; that honor belongs to Heinrich Gottlieb Schmieder, whose translation was produced in Mainz on March 13, 1789. Neefe's premiered on September 27, 1789 in Mannheim and was repeated in Bonn on October 13; for the latter performance the young Beethoven played viola in the orchestra. When Neefe made a piano-vocal transcription of the opera some months later, however, he decided to use Schröder's translation, finding it superior to his own. For the history of early performances of the opera see Edward J. Dent, *Mozart's Operas. A Critical Study,* London: Oxford University Press

While Neefe and Rochlitz are well known to music historians, Friedrich Ludwig Schröder is probably not. Schröder was a member of the composer's circle from 1781 until 1785 — or rather, the composer was a member of his, since Schröder's name would have been far more quickly recognized then.[7] A key player in the Shakespeare revival in Germany during the mid-eighteenth century, Schröder brought that revival to a climax with his electrifying performances as Hamlet in 1776, in a production utilizing his own translation. A comparison of his version of «To be or not to be» with those of Wieland, Herder, and Lessing will show how gifted he was at this difficult art.[8] Wieland's elegant sentences look better on the page than they sound out loud, and neither his prose nor Herder's blank verse is quite as true to the English as Lessing's version. Written at Schröder's request, Lessing's is the best-sounding of the three, yet Schröder with a few, deft touches makes it still better — for example, substituting *wider* for *gegen* and *Leiden* for *Schöße*, cutting off the optional final *e* to make *Elendes Elends* and *Schlafe Schlaf*, shortening the unfortunate alliteration *den Leiden eines so langen Lebens* to *den Leiden des Lebens*, and so on.

Shakespeare, Hamlet, III, i, 56-69
To be or not to be — that is the question,
Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer
The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,
Or to take arms against a sea of troubles
And by opposing end them. To die, to sleep—
No more, and by a sleep to say we end

The heartache and the thousand natural shocks
That flesh is heir to. 'Tis a consummation
Devoutly to be wished. To die, to sleep,
To sleep — perchance to dream. Aye, there's the rub,
For in that sleep of death what dreams may come
When we have shuffled off this mortal coil

Must give us pause. There's the respect
That makes calamity of so long life.
(etc.)

Herder:
Sein oder nicht mehr sein — das ist die Frage!
Obs edler sei, die Pfeil' und Hohngeschoße
Des Tückeschicksals immerfort zu dulden,
wie? oder geg'n ein ganzes Meer von Unruh
aufstehn, und widerstrebend alle enden!
Sterben! Entschlafen! Schlafen! sonst nichts mehr?
wie? und entschlafend sagen können: «aus ists
Das Herzensach, die tausend Stöß' und Qualen
die unsers Fleisches Erbteil sind.» So ists
ja alles höchstandächtgen Wunsches Fülle
zu sterben! zu entschlafen! Schlafen? Ei —
vielleicht auch träumen? — ah, da liegt der Knoten!
Denn was in diesem Todesschlaf für Träume
uns kommen mögen, wenn wir denn dem Lärm
des Lebens auch entrannen: das, das gibt
uns Stillestand! Die Rücksicht ist's, die nun
und uns Jammer macht zu langem Lebensjammer!
(usw.)

Wieland:
Sein oder nicht sein — das ist die Frage — Ob es einem edlen Geist anständiger ist, sich den Beleidigungen des Glücks geduldig zu unterwerfen, oder seinen Anfällen entgegen zu stehen, und durch einen herzhaften Streich sie auf einmal zu endigen? Was ist sterben? — Schlafen — das ist alles — und durch einen guten Schlaf sich auf immer vom Kopfweh und allen andern Plagen, wovon unser Fleisch Erbe ist, zu erledigen, ist ja eine Glückseligkeit, die man einem andächtiglich zubeten sollte. — Sterben — Schlafen — Doch vielleicht ist es was mehr — wie wann es träumen wäre? — Da steckt der Haken — Was nach dem irdischen Getümmel in diesem langen Schlaf des Todes für Träume folgen können, das ist es, was uns stutzen machen muß. Wenn das nicht wäre, wer würde die Mißhandlungen und Staupenschläge der Zeit[...] (usw.)

Lessing:[9]
Sein, oder ***nicht sein***: das ist also die Frage. Ist edler die Seele dessen, der Wurf und Pfeil des angreifenden Schicksals duldet? Oder dessen, der sich ***gegen*** alle die Heere des ***Elendes*** rüstet, und widerstrebend es endigt? — Sterben — Schlafen; weiter nichts; und mit diesem ***Schlafe*** den Gram unserer Seele, die unzählbaren ***Stöße*** der Natur endigen, die hier unser Erbteil sind, ist eine Vollendung, die wir mit Andacht wünschen sollten. — Sterben, schlafen. Schlafen? Vielleicht auch träumen. Da, da ***liegt es***! Denn was uns in diesem Todesschlafe für Träume kommen möchten, wenn wir nun dem Geräusch hier entronnen sind, das verdient Erwägung. Dies ist die Rücksicht, warum wir uns ***den Leiden eines so langen Lebens*** unterwerfen. (usw.)

Schröder:[10]
Sein oder ***Nichtsein***, das ist also die Frage. Ist edler die Seele dessen, der Wurf und Pfeil des angreifenden Schicksals duldet? Oder dessen, der sich ***wider*** alle die Heere des ***Elends*** rüstet und widerstrebend es endigt? — Sterben — Schlafen; weiter nichts,

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[2]1947, ch. 8; Christof Bitter, *Wandlungen in den Inszenierungsformen des Don Giovanni von 1787 bis 1928*, Regensburg: Gustav Bosse Verlag 1961; and Julian Rushton, *W. A. Mozart, Don Giovanni*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1981, ch. 5.

7 On Schröder and the Shakespeare revival see Simon Williams, *German Actors of the 18th and 19th Centuries: Idealism, Romanticism, and Realism*, Westport, CT: Greenwood Press 1985; the same author's *Shakespeare on the German Stage*, vol. I: 1586-1914, New York 1990, ch. 4; and Werner Habicht, «Shakespeare in Nineteenth-Century Germany: The Making of a Myth», in: *Nineteenth-Century Germany, A Symposium*, ed. Modris Eksteins and Hildegard Hammerschmidt, Tübingen 1983, pp. 141-57.

8 For the translations of this soliloquy by Wieland, Herder, and Lessing see Roy Pascal, *Shakespeare in Germany 1740-1815*, New York: Octagon Books 1971, pp. 72-73 and 177-179. Schröder made two editions of *Hamlet*, in 1776 and 1778. The text of the 1778 edition, quoted here, is found in: *Die Aufnahme Shakespeares auf der Bühne der Aufklärung in den sechziger und siebziger Jahren*, ed Fritz Brüggemann, Leipzig: Philipp Reclam jr. 1937, pp. 165-233.

9 Changes Schröder made to Lessing's translation are indicated by boldface.

10 Vgl. Fußnote 9.

> und mit diesem ***Schlaf*** den Gram unserer Seele, die unzählbaren ***Leiden*** der Natur endigen, die hier unser Erbteil sind, ist eine Vollendung, die wir mit Andacht wünschen sollten. — Sterben, schlafen. Schlafen? Vielleicht auch träumen. Da, da ***liegt's***! Denn was uns in diesem Todesschlafe für Träume kommen möchten, wenn wir nur dem Geräusch hier entronnen sind, das verdient Erwägung. Dies ist die Rücksicht, warum wir uns ***den Leiden des Lebens*** unterwerfen. (usw.)

The appearance of the ghost in Act I of Shakespeare's play was much discussed in the eighteenth century because it was regarded as nearly impossible to bring off. Most German stages, it was felt, were too small to convey the vast distance between the two characters' different «worlds», and the conversation between them went on so long the necessary terror and solemnity were hard to sustain.[11] Schröder had the clever idea of using the scenery to help him, placing the action in a churchyard rather than on a rampart of the castle as indicated by Shakespeare.

Mozart was made aware of the problem with such scenes at least as early as 1780. In October of that year he saw Schröder's *Hamlet* in Salzburg, though in a performance led not by the great Schröder himself but by Emanuel Schikaneder, later the librettist of *Die Zauberflöte*. Soon thereafter the composer left for Munich to work on *Idomeneo*. On November 29 he wrote to his father about the pivotal scene in *Idomeneo* where the oracle appears, recalling discussions he must have had with Schikaneder about the ghost scene in *Hamlet*:

> Sagen sie mir, finden Sie nicht, daß die Rede von der unterirdischen Stimme zu lang ist? Ueberlegen Sie es recht. — Stellen Sie sich das Theater vor [he means specifically the Hoftheater in Munich], die Stimme muss schreckbar sein — sie muss eindringen — man muss glauben, es sey wirklich so — wie kann sie das bewirken, wenn die Rede zu lang ist, durch welche Länge die Zuhörer immer mehr von dessen [sic] Nichtigkeit überzeugt werden? — Wäre im Hamlet die Rede des Geistes nicht so lang, sie würde noch von besserer Wirkung seyn [...][12]

The Munich stage was quite large, twenty-five meters deep, and a single voice had to somehow «penetrate [*eindringen*]» that space. Mozart's decision to write three trombones into the score not only underlined the solemnity of the scene, as is generally remarked; it also raised the volume. On the question of the scene's length, he might have been less concerned if he had seen Schröder himself play Hamlet. This he soon had plenty of chances to do. In the spring of 1781, both he and, by coincidence, Schröder moved to Vienna. There they met, became friends, and initiated plans, which were apparently never finalized, to write an opera together.[13]

Schröder's translation of *Don Giovanni*, like his translation of *Hamlet*, is no mere word-for-word equivalent but a revamping, especially of places where the original text appeared not to conform to contemporary tastes and morals.[14] Such wholesale rewriting was commonplace then, and by no means only in Germany.[15] Schröder's version of *Hamlet* prunes the cast from thirty to fifteen. The goal was to simplify Shakespeare's plot and remove its unseemly mix of tragedy and comedy. Schröder's *Hamlet* includes no gravediggers and no Rosencrantz, and ends with Hamlet alive and well.

Similarly, in his *Don Giovanni* libretto Schröder (like Neefe before him) turns *opera buffa* into Singspiel, recasting the recitatives as spoken dialog and heightening the moral contrasts. Good vs. evil, virtue rewarded — these were central to the new genre of the Singspiel, as we see later in *Die Zauberflöte*.

The second major change Schröder made was to divide the opera's two acts into four. Act II now begins with the wedding-party of Zerlina and Masetto, Act IV with the churchyard and the first appearance of the statue. This change is more significant than it may appear. It radically reshapes the action: Act I and Act IV become mirrors of each other — two contrasting duels between Giovanni and the Commendatore, both of them centering on darkness, death, and retribution. The notion that the action takes place within twenty-four hours, the opera as a whole symbolizing the lifecycle, now seems irresistible. The statue's appearance in Act IV is opposed to the sunny opening of Act II, where innocent lovers cavort until they are interrupted by the satanic don. Schröder has boiled the opera down to dualities, homing in on the theme of virtue rewarded and sin punished.

With Schröder's *Don Juan* we are poised between Singspiel and Romantic tragedy. A further step in the direction of tragedy was taken by Mozart's pupil, Franz Xaver Süßmayer, who directed the opera in 1798 using Schröder's four-act division but without the last scene, which serves as epilog. Cutting this scene meant that the last thing audiences saw was a defiant Giovanni, his every «Nein!» punctuated by a *fortissimo* orchestra as he sank into the netherworld. Because it was Süßmayer who made this cut people assumed it had been sanctioned by Mozart himself. The opera was performed this way throughout the nineteenth century, sometimes with the addition of a crowning quasi-religious tableau of some sort accompanied either by newly composed music or by an excerpt from Mozart's Requiem. The legend grew that the composer had never liked the epilog, that he been forced to write it in a bow to current taste.[16]

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11 Williams, *Shakespeare on the German Stage*, p. 80.

12 *Mozart. Briefe*, vol. IV, pp. 34-35.

13 See Mozart's letter to his father dated June 16, 1781 in: *Mozart. Briefe*, vol. III, pp. 130-133.

14 *Dom* [sic] *Juan. Oper in vier Aufzügen von Mozart* [Klavier-Aufzug von C. G. Neefe, mit deutschem und italienischen Text von F. Schröder], Bonn: N. Simrock [1789]. For commentary on Schröder's translation see Bitter, pp. 73ff. As far as I am aware, Schröder's spoken dialog has not survived.

15 One thinks, for example, of the Homer translations and Shakespeare updatings by Alexander Pope, which also recast or omitted any passages considered morally or aesthetically offensive. Wieland's version of *Hamlet* was, in fact, based not on Shakespeare, but on Pope. Schröder worked from the original.

16 *Don Juan, Oper in zwei Aufzügen von W. A. Mozart*, ed. Carl Friedrich Wittmann, Leipzig: Philipp Reclam jr. (ca. 1935), p. 16, was still

Reviewers of the opera during its long era as a Singspiel generally admired the music but assaulted the libretto, which most took to be a more or less straightforward rendering of Lorenzo da Ponte.[17] In 1801, in the Foreword to his translation, Friedrich Rochlitz announces that he intends to give *Don Giovanni* the libretto its great music deserves.[18] To his work as translator Rochlitz brought his deep admiration for a composer whose life he viewed as a tragedy and whose music held for him mystical power.

The Rochlitz libretto, though based on Schröder's, reshapes the dialogue to give us a Don Giovanni who is very nearly a Hamlet. When performed in four acts and minus the epilog, as it typically was, the result is dangerously close to tragedy. Rochlitz's translation remained standard for well over a century. Its effect on the history of performance, on philosophizing and poetizing about the opera has been incalculable.

The two places most affected by Rochlitz's changes are the Act I wedding-party scene and the scene in the churchyard — that is, the opening of Schröder's Act II and Act IV, which are also the two moments later singled out by both Liszt and Mörike. Rochlitz's Don Giovanni is a disillusioned man who tells Zerlina he yearns for a quiet life in «[der] schönen Natur. [...] Darum suche ich mir jetzt eine Gemahlin, von der ich mir nichts wünsche, als daß ich sie und sie mich lieben kann[...]»

In Rochlitz's version of the churchyard scene Don Giovanni, instead of chatting with Leporello about the day's conquests, reflects upon the transitoriness of life:

> Die Verständigen sollten oft hierher gehen, um sich anzufrischen, jede Minute des Lebens ganz auszukosten! Denn was ist's denn mit dem ganzen Plunder? Eins, zwei, drei —: so liegen wir da, und eine Nachwelt, die mehr zu thun hat, als unsrer zu gedenken, tritt uns mit der größten Gleichgültigkeit auf der Nase herum [...] Doch woher kommen mir solche alberne Gedanken? Ich sehe wohl, ich muß wieder ins Leben, und tiefer, um die Grillerey los zu werden. Frisch auf denn! Das ist Leporello! He! Leporello!

A dozen years after Rochlitz's libretto appeared, the journal of which he was editor published a fictional tale based on *Don Giovanni* written by the young E.T.A. Hoffmann. In Hoffmann's mind there really was only one Mozart opera worth discussing. Much has been written about the historical impact of his wondrous Don Juan-tale and his Berlin review of 1815[19]; however, as we have seen, Hoffmann did not come out of nowhere: there was important history before him. To readers of the Rochlitz libretto Hoffmann's portrayal of Don Juan as a fallen Faustian is not particularly shocking. Worth considering, in fact, is whether his tale could have been written at all without Rochlitz having preceded him. Still, Hoffmann left us two major contributions to *Don Giovanni*-interpretation, both of them lasting. The first, which was unfortunate though understandable, was his elevation of Donna Anna to tragic heroine. The second, which was extremely helpful, was his plea that the recitatives be restored. They should be accompanied, he believed, by string quartet, an idea that was taken up by Meyerbeer in 1845, marking the first time since 1788 that the original Mozart recitatives had been heard in public performance. The Donna Anna on that occasion, incidentally, was Jenny Lind.

When Franz Liszt composed his brilliant *Don Juan-Fantasy* he probably knew the opera in its Singspiel version with text by Rochlitz. Certainly this was true of Mörike. Both of them regarded the opera as a tragedy, its hero a man of Shakespearian, even Promethean proportions, its ending the awesome and implacable judgment of God. They both focused, as it happened, on the very scenes that had been most often revised since Mozart's day: the confrontation between Giovanni and the ghost, and, as foil to this, the Arcadian scene with Zerlina and Masetto. In their two utterly different works, Liszt and Mörike both show us a hero with a youthful past that he can no longer reclaim and who, headed toward eternal damnation, struggles against it until he can struggle no longer.

I do not know if Liszt viewed the opera as more than the journey of a tragic hero, that is, if he saw it also as an allegory of the composer himself: Mozart as Romantic genius, a darling of the gods whose personal life defied

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arguing this in the 1930s. The editors of the *Neue Mozart-Ausgabe* (Serie II. Bühnenwerke. Werkgruppe 5, Bd. 17, *Il dissoluto punito ossia il Don Giovanni*, pp. XII-XIII) contend (refuting Bitter, p. 60) that Mozart cut the epilog for the Viennese premiere, calling instead for the singers to come forward and scream together on a D-major chord. Problem was, as Dent (p. 143) phrases it, «they came on and shrieked as they pleased». One does not know whether Mozart reinstated all, part, or none of the epilog for later performances in Vienna; nor indeed is it certain that he made the cut for the Viennese premiere. He seems never to have been quite sure how he wanted the opera to end. The Romantics, who could not have known this fact but somehow intuited it, went on to build upon it a host of rhetorical castles.

17 See the reviews in Otto Erich Deutsch, *Mozart. A Documentary Biography*, trans. Eric Blom, Peter Branscombe, and Jeremy Noble, Stanford: Stanford University Press 1966, pp. 341ff.

18 *Don Juan, Oper in zwei Akten. Nach dem Italienischen des Abb. da Ponte frei bearbeitet*, Leipzig: Breitkopf und Härtel 1801, pp. II-III: «[...] ich [bin] zuweilen von dem Italiener ganz — nicht nur in den Worten, sondern auch im Sinn [—] abgegangen. Es geschahe in der Ueberzeugung, es sei besser gethan, den Text aus der herrlichen Musik, als aus den zuweilen doch etwas ungereimten Reimen des Gedichts zu ziehen. [...] Elvirens adeliches Wesen glaubte ich, so viel möglich, gegen die Mishandlungen des Tropfs Leporello in Schutz nehmen, und den Juan im zweiten Akt in eine Stimmung versetzen zu müssen, wo es wenigstens gedenkbar wird, dass sich Einer steinerne Gäste bittet.»

19 There are several modern editions of the tale; for his review of a production of the opera in Berlin in September, 1815, see Hoffmann, *Schriften zur Musik: Aufsätze und Rezensionen*, ed. Friedrich Schnapp, München: Winkler Verlag 1963, pp. 297-301 and 349-351. For English translations of both see *E.T.A. Hoffmann's Musical Writings, Kreisleriana, The Poet and the Composer, Music Criticism*, David Charlton, ed. and trans. by Martyn Clarke, New York: Cambridge University Press 1989.

moral standards and whose music overstepped mortal boundaries. Mörike definitely saw it this way.[20] This is what his novella is finally about, what lends to his retelling of the 1787 trip to Prague its depth and poignancy.

It is fashionable to ridicule such Romantic interpretations of *Don Giovanni* as those I have outlined here. This seems an unnecessary insult. These men responded to the work as it was presented to them. We tend to take the first performance in Prague as normative, but why we do this is unclear, since Mozart himself had doubts about it. Six months later he made numerous changes before the opera debuted in Vienna. In particular, he appears never to have made up his mind about about the epilog — should he omit it altogether, shorten it, or leave it intact?

Mozart had come to Prague with an unfinished manuscript. This was not at all unusual for him — he did so quite often. What he still had left to write, besides the overture, were by coincidence those very parts of the opera that so fascinated Liszt and Mörike: the wedding-party scene in Act I and the finale of Act II. The tricky one, of course, was the finale. Unlike the appearance of the oracle in *Idomeneo*, this time he had to make a ghostly apparition credible in a *comic* opera. Could this have been what was on his mind when he described *Don Giovanni* as «eine solche Oper»? At all events, he took great risks with this scene: the level of dissonance is really quite extraordinary, the trombones more «penetrating» in Prague than they had been in the notably larger theater in Munich. Finally, the length of the scene tests not only the musicians' stamina but also, as Mozart was well aware, the audience's credulity. How deeply gratified he must have felt when, two years later, a critic wrote that «Mozart must have learned the language of ghosts from Shakespeare.»[21]

By then, however, *Don Giovanni* was already a Singspiel. Those most responsible for its transformation were neither literary hacks nor careless bumblers, but sensitive people who knew the composer and his music, and who *for that reason* wanted to provide Mozart's music with the libretto they thought it deserved. In the process they inadvertently severed the opera from its roots in Bertati, Goldoni, and Molière.[22] While this older, more classical tradition was one Mozart felt comfortable with, he was also attracted to the newer, German genre of Singspiel. We have no record of how he felt about the 1789 translations of Neefe and Schröder or about the tossing out of all those recitatives. Much less can we picture how he might have reacted to the grandiose works of music and literature derived from his opera by the Romantics. There seems little doubt, however, that *Don Giovanni's* curious yet historically inevitable journey from *buffa* to Singspiel to tragedy is precisely what achieved for it the exalted status of «opera of all operas». Mozart, who enjoyed a good joke, would have loved the irony of that.

Chronology

1776 Friedrich Ludwig Schröder produces *Hamlet* in Hamburg.
1780 Schröder's company tours Germany with *Hamlet* and other plays.
Emanuel Schikaneder's troupe presents fall season of plays in Salzburg;
Schikaneder gives the Mozart family season tickets.
October 30 Mozarts see Schikaneder as Hamlet in Schröder's translation.
November 29 Mozart compares oracle scene in *Idomeneo* to ghost scene in *Hamlet.*
1781 Mozart moves to Vienna.
Schröder moves to Vienna, engaged as actor at Burgtheater.
1785 Schröder leaves Vienna, returns to Hamburg.
1787 Premiere of *Don Giovanni* in Prague.
1788 Premiere of *Don Giovanni* in Vienna.
Neefe translates opera as *Don Juan, der bestrafte Wüstling oder der Krug geht so lange zu Wasser bis er bricht.*
1789 Schröder's *Don Juan* premieres in Hamburg. Opera now in four acts.
Neefe publishes piano-vocal score using Schröder's translation, regarding it as superior to his own.
1791 death of Mozart.
1793 E.T.A. Hoffmann sees Schröder's *Don Juan* in Königsberg. Buys piano-vocal score (presumably Neefe's with text by Schröder).
1798 Süßmayer directs Schröder's *Don Juan* in Vienna without the epilog.
1801 Rochlitz publishes his *Don Juan,* based on Schröder's.
1813 Hoffmann's *Don Juan* appears in *Allgemeine musikalische Zeitung.*
1815 Hoffmann reviews Berlin performance of the opera for the *AMZ.*
1824 Mörike sees *Don Juan* in Stuttgart.

20 Wates, «Eduard Mörike», pp. 33, 38, 45.

21 Deutsch, *Mozart*, p. 341. Cf. Nissen, *Biographie W. A. Mozarts, Anhang*, pp. 64-65, who asserts that Mozart's scene was more difficult to write than Shakespeare's had been. Rushton, *W. A. Mozart, Don Giovanni*, p. 147f., if I do not misread him, is somewhat appalled that the parallel to Shakespeare was drawn and is also perhaps unaware of the reasons behind it.

22 Rushton, *W. A. Mozart, Don Giovanni*, p. 68, makes this important point.

1841 Liszt composes *Don Juan-Fantasy.* Fiftieth anniversary of Mozart's death.
1845 Meyerbeer conducts opera in Berlin in Rochlitz translation, recitatives translated (apparently from da Ponte) by Johann Philipp Schmidt. Jenny Lind sings Donna Anna.
1855 Mörike, *Mozart auf der Reise nach Prag.*
1856 Centennial of Mozart's birth.
1859 Otto Jahn in vol. 4 of his *W. A. Mozart* praises Rochlitz's *Don Juan* as best translation despite its flaws. Criticizes others as having too much comedy.

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